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SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE POSITION IN OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO

REF: OUAGADOUGOU 114

Classified By: Charg d'Affaires Samuel C. Laeuchli for reasons 1.4(a) and (c)

¶1. (U) Summary: Reftel was submitted to inform the Department of State (DOS) of the increased workload and expanded Military Cooperation portfolio in Burkina Faso and to formally request the rapid establishment of a permanent Department of Defense (DOD) uniformed military position at the Embassy. This follow-up cable is the result of discussions between the Country Team in Burkina Faso, U.S. Africa Command, and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). This cable was initiated and fully supported by Ambassador Jeanine Jackson.
End Summary.

¶2. (U) Over the past three years, the rapid and exponential increase in Military Cooperation between Burkina Faso and the United States, coupled with Burkina Faso's growing regional political and military leadership, necessitates the establishment of a permanent military position at Post. The dramatic increase in military-to-military (M2M) engagement and DOD activity in-country has completely overwhelmed the Embassy's resources and requires an experienced field grade officer (O-4/O-5) to manage the large increase in M2M activities supported by Post on behalf of DOD. Embassy Ouagadougou requests a permanent DOD position be established as soon as possible in support of engagement with this key regional partner. Without the addition of this position, Post will reluctantly be forced to scale back M2M activities with the Burkinabe military, losing a critical opportunity to build a strong and lasting military partnership with one of the United States' few stable allies in this troubled region.

¶3. (U) Over the past several years, the United States has transitioned from a limited, almost non-existent M2M relationship with Burkina Faso - consisting of a \$100,000 International Military Education and Training (IMET) budget and periodic Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) events - to a maturing, resource-dependent relationship requiring a dedicated uniformed military presence in country. The following paragraphs summarize the current state of Military Cooperation in Ouagadougou.

¶4A. (U) Burkina Faso is a Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Program (TSCTP) partner and is awaiting final approval from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) for membership into Operation Enduring Freedom - Trans Sahara (OEF-TS). In 2006, the President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaore approved the basing of a Joint Special Operations Air Detachment (JSOAD) in Ouagadougou to support U.S. Special Operations Command Europe's (SOCEUR) medical evacuation and logistics requirements. President Compaore also authorized significant improvements to the JSOAD hangar and basing area at no cost to the U.S. Government.

¶4B. (U) Increased DOD engagement has brought a dramatic increase in workload for the Embassy. Between February 2008 and March 2009, the

Embassy approved approximately 1000 country clearance requests, fully one-third of which were DOD or DOD-related. Significant future Military Cooperation is anticipated. In the next year, Burkina Faso will host the Multinational Coordination Cell for exercise Flintlock 2010, along with several OEF-TS training events. These activities require a dedicated uniformed presence at the Embassy to facilitate engagement with the host nation and to provide situational awareness of DOD activity to the Country Team. In FY09, Burkina Faso submitted a Tranche 1 1206 proposal which was approved by AFRICOM but unfunded.

The proposal has been resubmitted for Tranche 2, and if funded, will require significant resources in-country and engagement with the host nation to implement.

¶C. (S/REL USA BFA CAN GBR) As of April 2009, there are 14 active duty DOD personnel on the ground in Burkina Faso supporting AFRICOM, the JSOAD, and the Aztec Archer Intelligence Fusion Cell. DOD contractors providing ground logistics support, emergency medical evacuation, and air logistics support for OEF-TS, increase the total number of DOD personnel to 38. By the end of FY 09, DOD presence in country is projected to reach 65, one of the highest DOD footprints in Africa (behind Djibouti, Kenya and Uganda all of whom have dedicated, permanent DOD positions to support their missions.)

¶D. (U) Even before becoming a TSCTP partner, Burkina Faso actively sought and participated in SOCEUR-led training, military exercises, DOD-funded humanitarian assistance, and public outreach programs. Past and planned DOD activities include: Air Force Office of Special Investigations force protection familiarization, humanitarian assistance projects, medical assistance teams, avian flu seminars and assistance, medical equipment donations, HIV/AIDS DHAPP funded programs, small arms and light weapons assistance, Joint/Combined Exchange Training (JCET), counterterrorism training, intelligence familiarization and basic officer training, public diplomacy programs

to counter extremism, engineering projects, professionalization of officers and noncommissioned officers, and counter narcotics training.

¶E. (U) Burkina Faso is a partner in the State Department-led/DOD supported Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) program. ACOTA has trained three 750-man Burkinabe battalions for peace support operations. It has also provided specialized equipment to a battalion deploying to the UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) in ¶2009. President Blaise Compaore has expressed the desire to participate in the UN mission in Somalia, and peacekeeping operations worldwide, which makes additional ACOTA training missions in-country likely. As an example, Burkina Faso recently agreed to participate in joint training conducted by the United States, Italy, Canada, and the Netherlands with several of its police units.

¶F. (U) Because of Burkina Faso's increased regional role, the rapid expansion of M2M engagement, the growth of OEF-TS presence, and receptiveness to the United States, Burkina Faso is rapidly becoming a popular destination for Congressional and Congressional Staff delegations. These visits have naturally focused on the Embassy's increased DOD engagement portfolio. During a recent two-week period in April, Post hosted two staff delegations and one Congressional delegation (led by a sub-committee chairman). All visits have specifically included requests for discussions of M2M activities.

¶4. (S/NF) Burkina Faso is playing a more prominent role in West African regional affairs. President Compaore has mediated conflicts in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire and Togo. Reflecting this regional focus, the former Burkinabe Foreign Minister is the UN/AU joint chief mediator for Darfur. Burkina Faso is also an important contributor to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) standby force, and will host their logistics exercise this year. The Burkinabe military is regarded as competent and professional. Geographically, Burkina Faso occupies a key strategic location in West Africa. It borders states with known AQIM activity and may serve as a safe haven or transit point. At present, intelligence on this critical terrorist and security-related threat is absent. The Defense Attach Office (DAO) in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire provides regional coverage of Burkina Faso. Of DAO Abidjan's 30 collection requirements (including 22 priority 2 collection requirements) 15 are West African Sahel requirements (including 14 of the 22 priority 2 requirements) and are not applicable to Cote d'Ivoire. These requirements go largely unreported due to the absence of a resident

U.S. Defense Attach (DATT) in Ouagadougou.

¶15. (U) Access to Government of Burkina Faso officials is excellent. The United States is currently the largest provider of military assistance in-country, and the Burkinabe have been exceedingly accommodating of all requests from the Embassy. Consequently, Senior Ministry of Defense officials continue to ask why the U.S. does not have a dedicated DATT in Ouagadougou. The Government of Burkina Faso signed a Global Status of Forces Agreement in 2007 (one of the least complicated negotiations in recent memory, and one of only two Global Status of Forces Agreements in Africa), an Access Only Agreement for the JSOAD aircraft in 2007, and an Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) with DOD in 2008. Together, these documents represent an extraordinary commitment and willingness by the Government of Burkina Faso to strengthen and cement ties with the United States and its Armed Forces.

¶16. (U) For the past several years, the Embassy's Security Cooperation Programs have been managed by two Foreign Service Nationals and one junior State Department Political/Military officer, with assistance from the Regional DATT to Cote d'Ivoire. Present Embassy manning is insufficient to support an increasingly expanding and challenging Security Cooperation portfolio. The Political/Military officer has significant Embassy responsibilities, including reporting mandated by Congress and DOS. The Regional DATT is limited by his primary duties in Cote d'Ivoire, and by not residing in Burkina Faso cannot conduct the necessary direct face-to-face contact required to support an increasing M2M relationship. This situation is no longer manageable by Post.

¶17. (U) Post strongly recommends that DOD establish a permanent uniformed DOD position in Ouagadougou. A dedicated in-country representative is required to advise the Chief of Mission on M2M Engagement and Security Cooperation issues, to report significant military, political, and terrorist activity, to represent AFRICOM and DOD to the Government of Burkina Faso and foreign militaries, to manage engagement with the Burkinabe military (including Flintlock 2010 and JCETs), to supervise peacekeeping activities, to supervise training and equipping), and to oversee the IMET and ACSS programs.

¶18. (U) The State Department's Office of the Inspector General recently concluded an inspection of Post. In the report, the inspectors addressed Post's difficulty at managing M2M engagement,

stating that "Post cannot long support this burden," and made the recommendation that "the Bureau of African Affairs request the establishment of a permanently staffed military presence at Embassy Ouagadougou."

¶19. (U) AFRICOM is currently providing limited, temporary support until a permanent position can be established. Based on its current needs, Post urgently requests a permanent position, along with appropriate support positions, be established as soon as possible. Without a permanent, uniformed DOD presence at the Embassy to manage emerging M2M issues, Post will be forced to prioritize and consider reducing DOD activities in Burkina Faso. A reduction in activity would represent a lost opportunity to foster a strong and lasting military partnership with a willing ally in a troubled and unstable region.

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